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ABSTRACT

This paper presents findings from the 1999 Survey of California Teacher Education, with follow-up telephone interviews in 2000. The four-item survey examined the extent to which 53 California teacher training institutions included courses, activities, and modules relating to three areas of focus identified in state documents: (1) developing beginning teacher communication skills to dialogue with families; (2) providing ways to involve parents in learning activities with their children at home; and (3) finding ways to connect home culture to learning at school. The follow-up telephone interviews asked teacher educators how they incorporated parent involvement in their courses. Results indicate that universities which offered basic teacher credentials incorporated parent involvement issues within existing courses. Universities primarily focused on parent involvement issues and activities within courses dealing with language arts/reading, cultural diversity, and teaching English as a Second Language. The universities highlighted the importance of parent involvement through activities related to parent conferencing, interviews, and conflict resolution. Most teacher education programs did not use computer technology to connect with parents. Teachers tended to acquire parent involvement concepts and skills using case studies. An appendix includes the survey. (SM)

PARENT INVOLVEMENT AS A COMPONENT OF TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN CALIFORNIA

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Parent Involvement as a Component of Teacher Education Programs in California

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ABSTRACT

The common cliché that our children are our future is a global concept. A growing concern in America is to bridge any gaps that separate agencies which support families, including schools. The link forged between family and school connects the two groups influencing student character and academic achievement upon which future societal achievements rest (Davies and Epstein, 1991). Since the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, schools have received increased mandates to connect these two spheres of influence (Hiatt, 1992).

In California, 1993 legislation formally initiated a review of Standards and Requirements which beginning teachers should possess in order to actively work with parents at their respective future school sites. In spring 1999, the California Department of Education completed the publication of two documents--Preparing Educators for Partnerships with Families and Joining Hands--which can be used by the colleges and universities who prepare future teachers. These documents encourage teacher training institutions to focus on three areas of teacher preparation: develop beginning teacher communication skills to dialogue with families; provide ways to involve parents in learning activities with their children at home; and ways to connect home culture to learning at school.

This presentation will provide findings from Hiatt-Michael Survey of California Teacher Education completed summer 1999 and follow-up telephone interviews in winter 2000. These findings will portray the extent to which California's teacher training institutions include courses, activities, modules relating to the three areas of focus identified in the state document.

Background of Study's Problem

The United States of America has been the melting pot and now the salad bowl for immigrants arriving from all parts of the world. Prior to World War II, New York City was considered the primary entry point for arriving immigrants. However, the Pacific Rim cities as Los Angeles have become the first home to diverse immigrant waves. Statistics on California indicate that White European background groups do not comprise a majority of the state's student population. Hispanics, which include both Mexican and Latin country immigrants, are the largest subgroup. However, the state population has Vietnamese, Korean, Chinese, Japanese, South Pacific groups. In Los Angeles, statistics indicates that approximately 70 different languages, excluding dialects, are represented by non-English speaking students attending public schools.

Teachers, however, are primarily from White population. See figure 1 for comparison by ethnic groups. In addition, teachers tend to be primarily female, possess a master's degree or an equivalent degree, and tend to be older than parents.

The gap between teachers' backgrounds and those of the classroom students and their parents is a continuing concern to researchers and educators. When the Head Start (1964) and the Elementary/Secondary Education Act (1965) were passed by U.S. Congress, requirements for parent involvement were included. This funding also included that 8% of the funds be allocated to evaluation. With this funding added to the mandate, parent involvement became one of the assessed factors. In the Improving America's Schools Act of 1993, this mandate was re-emphasized (U.S. Department of Education, 1993).

Research findings on parent involvement over the past thirty years reveal many benefits of parent involvement. Repeatedly findings suggest parent involvement in school activities is correlated to student satisfaction with school and academic achievement (Epstein, 1991; Henderson & Berla, 1994). Therefore, one of the eight national educational goals in Goals 2000 states "By the year 2000, every school will promote partnerships that will increase parent involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children." (U.S. Department of Education, 1994).

Harvard Family Research Project identified 22 states that mentioned "parent involvement, families, and related topics" in their teacher certification materials (Shartrand, *et al.*, 1997). The Harvard Family Research Project revealed that university programs lacked information regarding model programs in training teachers to effectively use home-school practices. This highlighted California's leadership in the area of parent involvement at the early childhood education level. This researcher was active in this area during her early career in public and private at both K-12 and teacher training levels.

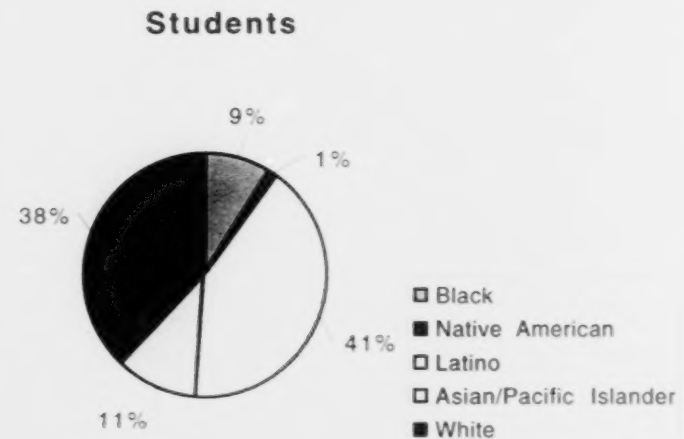
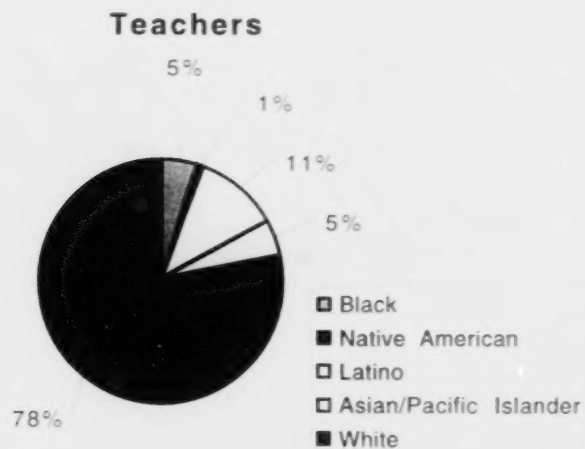
In California, 1993 legislation formally initiated a review of Standards and Requirements which beginning teachers should possess in order to actively work with parents at their respective future school sites (California Department of Education, 1998). In spring 1999, the California Department of Education completed the publication of two documents--Preparing Educators for Partnerships with Families and Joining Hands--which can be used by the colleges and universities who prepare future teachers. The documents encourage teacher training institutions to focus on three areas of teacher preparation: develop beginning teacher communication

skills to dialogue with families; provide ways to involve parents in learning activities with their children at home; and ways to connect home culture to learning at school.

Parent involvement is particularly important to California because of the diversity of student population and the disproportionate number of teachers who are White. Figure 1 displays the ethnic diversity of the student population compared to the ethnic diversity of the teaching faculty. This figure highlights the high percentage of teachers who are white (78%) compared to teachers from other ethnic groups. In contrast, the percentage of white students is 38%. In all ethnic categories, there is a disparity between the ethnic background of teachers and students. At present, the greatest disparity is between percentage of enrolled Hispanic students and the low percentage of Hispanic teachers. This disparity is a serious concern for parents and department of education as many of these Hispanic students are acquiring English as a second language.

In addition to over-representation of white population, teachers tend to be female. This can create further alienation between teachers and fathers of children.

Ethnic Comparison Between California Students and Teachers for 1998



Purpose for Survey of California Teacher Education Institutions

Elected to serve as Chair for the Family-School-Community Partnership Special Interest Group of American Educational Research Association, this researcher wanted to know how the different teacher education institutions in California were implementing this new standard. In California, universities usually offer the credential program as a fifth year program after students have obtained a Bachelor's degree in any content area. Teacher education programs are important programs in these institutions as California Commission on Teacher Credentialing [CTC] grants over fourteen thousand basic teaching credentials per year. Basic teaching credentials are issued for kindergarten through elementary school teaching and for secondary academic content areas.

CTC has prepared a set of standards that each teacher education program must meet in order to be accredited. The university programs must incorporate these standards into their programs either through separate courses on the topic or through a series of integrated courses. California Department of Education

indicated that the new standard on parent involvement is one that is best actualized if infused into existing courses.

Methodology

During 1999-2000 academic year, California has 66 universities that are accredited by the CTC to grant the basic teaching credentials for multiple and single subject teaching credentials. All 66 universities were included in the study.

A short one-page four-item survey was prepared and pilot-tested on three directors of teacher education at three different universities. Based upon feedback, items were slightly modified for wording and addition of item choices. Recipients responded that the survey could be completed in less than five minutes. See Appendix A for the survey form.

A graduate assistant called each institution and determined the name of the appropriate person to send the survey. In June 1999, a cover letter, the survey, and a self-addressed stamped envelope were mailed to each identified person at each university. Respondents had the option to return the survey by mail or FAX.

Initial replies indicated that many identified persons were on vacation at the time of the first mailing. These persons were

contacted by telephone in September and a second survey form was mailed or sent by FAX.

This intensive method of data collection yielded an 80.3% return. Fifty-three out of 66 universities that grant the California basic teaching credential responded to the survey. The responses include 33 (91.7 %) of private universities and 20 (66.7 %) of public universities. The lower response rate from the public institutions may be attributed to the variety of teacher education programs offered at these sites and the director lacking knowledge of what was actually happening within the curriculum of each one. In those cases, the director was reluctant to provide information.

In winter 2000, the primary researcher and her graduate assistant contacted fulltime and adjunct faculty at three institutions, two public and one private. Faculty members were selected on the basis of the course they taught. The purpose of this telephone query was to ascertain how each faculty incorporated parent involvement in her course.

Findings

Five universities (9% of those responding) reported that the parent involvement standard was not included in their programs.

One of these five is a private university that grants more teaching credentials (over 1,000 credentials per year) than any other university. This university offers a teaching credential program at several locations throughout the state. This institution responded by mail and would not return telephone calls. One is a public university (granting about 600 credentials per year) and three others are private colleges with low student enrollment in teacher education (granting 25 or less credentials per year). One of these commented that "this standard is not incorporated at this time because we are a small program."

Five universities stated that they offered a separate course in parent involvement. Follow-up telephone calls to these institutions indicated that these special parent involvement courses, usually a 2 unit course, was required for special education or the early childhood education students and available to basic teacher credential students as an elective course. Therefore, few basic credential students would participate in such a course.

Teacher education institutions primarily incorporated the standard regarding parent involvement within existing courses in their programs. See Table 1 for rank order of courses by number of

Table 1

Rank Order of Number of Universities Responding to Courses That Include Parent Involvement (n=53)

Rank	Course	n
1	Language arts/reading	33
2	Cultural diversity	31
3	Second language acquisition	29
4	Instructional methods	28
5	Historical and social foundations of education	27
6	Special education	23
7	Curriculum development	22
8	Student teaching seminars (write-in)	17
9	Human development	14
10	Mathematics	13
11	Educational psychology	13
12	Research methods	1

institutions that responded. Eighty-seven percent of the universities responding to this survey identified courses that included a concept or skill related to parent involvement. Universities reported a range from one to eleven courses; the mode was five courses. Two private universities and one prominent public university replied that most of the teacher education program includes parent involvement issues. Courses--those identified by more than 55% of the respondents--focused on language arts/reading methods (62% of all responding institutions), cultural diversity (59% of all responding institutions), and second language acquisition (55% of all responding institutions). Universities reported that instructional methods (53% of all responding institutions), historical/social foundations (50% of all responding institutions), and special education (42% of all responding institutions) included parent involvement issues. Less than a third of responding institutions reported including parent involvement issues in courses as curriculum development, mathematics methods, and educational psychology. In additional comments, seventeen universities (32% of responding universities) stated that parent involvement was incorporated into student teaching seminars.

Fifty percent or more of the responding universities reported that parent conferencing (64%) and dealing with parent concerns (51%) were incorporated within existing courses. Next most frequently reported activities included home reading (47%) and parent interviews (42%). About one-third of responding universities indicated students were doing parent newsletters (34%) and home visits (34%). Less than thirty percent of universities mentioned that students were learning to include parents in classroom (30%), to participate in parent/student advocacy (28%), and to participate in community service (26%).

Case studies were the most frequently mentioned instructional method used to acquire parent involvement knowledge and skills. See Table 3. Thirty-one of 53 universities (59%) reported that students utilized case studies in one or more courses. Other instructional methods were research studies (40%); role-playing (38%), conflict resolution (34%); project creation (34%) and home surveys (25%).

Conclusions

Public and private universities offering basic teacher credentials incorporate parent involvement issues within existing

Table 2

Rank Order by Number of Universities Regarding Types of Parent Involvement Activities (n=53)

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Parent Involvement Activity</u>	<u>n</u>
1	Parent/teacher conferences	34
2	Dealing with parent concerns	27
3	Home reading	25
4	Parent interviews	22
5	Parent newsletters	18
6	Home visits	18
7	Including parents in classroom	16
8	Parent/student advocacy	15
9	Community service	14
10	Homework hotline	2

Table 3

Rank Order by Number of Universities Utilizing Selected
Instructional Methods to Teach Parent Involvement (n=53)

Rank	Instructional Method	n
1	Case studies	31
2	Research studies	21
3	Role-playing	20
4	Conflict resolution	18
5	Project creation	18
6	Home survey	13

courses. The findings are encouraging because eighty-nine percent of responding universities are implementing the new standard on teacher involvement in basic teacher education programs and utilizing existing courses. The purpose of the standard was not to mandate that universities create a new course but that university programs have parent involvement issues permeate the curriculum. The universities reported the number of courses from one to eleven with a mode of five courses that included parent involvement issues. This finding indicated that the intent of the state legislation is being met.

Universities primarily focus on parent involvement issues and activities within courses dealing with language arts/reading, cultural diversity, and teaching English as a second language. That universities most frequently reported language arts/reading methods as the course including parent involvement is not surprising. Reading is the highest priority academic topic in California. Research on student reading achievement reveals that positive parent involvement is essential to student success.

Telephone interviews indicated that university courses in this area include teaching student teachers how to involve parents in the

reading process. The importance of parents reading to their children and listening to their children read are the most frequently reported. Some institutions, such as Pepperdine University, have reading clinics connected to the reading course. In such clinics, the students contact and work with parents regarding the student's reading. For example, in my class for secondary teachers—a mandated course in our state—I require that my students contact parents before their first meeting with their student tutee. In this telephone conversation, I advise that they discuss with parents what they perceive are their child's problems in readings and what are the special interests of the child. They are to prepare their first lesson with the student based upon that conversation. During the course, they are to share their lessons and assessment of the student with parents on a weekly basis. At the end of the course, they write a report for both the tutee's parents and school. Tutees in our program may continue to work with another student teacher the next semester and, if so, the student teacher works from these prior reports.

It was also exciting to note the number of universities who reported that cultural diversity and second language acquisition

included parent involvement issues. Follow-up interviews indicated that course activities might include a student teacher intensive observation of one student followed by preparation of a case study, collection of information about the families in one school, home visit to a family culturally different from one's self, participation in school cultural diversity events, or tutoring a bilingual child.

Universities highlight importance of parent involvement through activities related to parent conferencing, interviews, and conflict resolution. The most long-established means of parent involvement, namely parent conferencing, was the most frequently reported activity across universities. This is an essential set of skills in parent-teacher relations. In many universities, student teachers role-play parent/teacher conference in which conflict occurs. During these role-playing sessions, the student teachers apply conflict resolution skills acquired in educational psychology or instructional methods courses.

Use of computer technology to connect with parents is absent in most teacher education programs. It was disappointing to note that promising new practices of parent involvement as school

homework hotlines (n=2) and connecting with parents via e-mail (n=0) were seldom reported.

However, some programs are incorporating well-researched methods of home-school communication. Several universities indicated that student teachers participated in preparation of parent newsletters (n=18), work with parents on home reading (n=25) or acquired skills to work with parents in the classroom (n=16).

Teachers participate in acquiring parent involvement concepts and skills through the use of case studies. Case studies are widely employed and frequently connected with courses as cultural diversity, instructional methods, and student teacher seminar. They also are used to acquire parent conferencing skills. The high frequency of case studies is heartening because Judy Shulman, Stanford University, has enthusiastically presented the usefulness of case study approach in teacher preparation for many years.

Implications

The Harvard Family Research Project (1994) revealed similar findings but with less intensity. In 1994 only 22 states had any mention of parent involvement in teacher credentialing

requirements. California was cited as the bellweather state in this report. Of the 22 states, parent involvement was primarily cited in reading, cultural diversity, and second language acquisition courses, similar to this study. Parent conferencing followed by home reading were reported as the most frequent parent involvement activities.

Teacher preparation programs have a long way to go in order to reach the vision of Don Davies and Joyce Epstein, America's most prolific writers and researchers on parent involvement. Their visions include teachers who view parents as part and parcel of the school community, in which the distinctions between the children's school and the community school blur. I believe that the distinctions were created as urban areas grew into metropolises, as teacher education universities created a group of professional teachers, as parents moved their families from school to school within the city and around the country, and as courts forced busing to integrate ethnic groups within schools.

Two generations ago, the distance between home and school was not as great as it is today. As a child growing up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin—founding town of kindergarten in America, I recall PTA meetings, school activities, teacher conferences as primary life

events connecting all members of the neighborhood. The school was used as the medical clinic, the place parents learned English, and location of community sporting events. The school brought the community together and served as the "melting pot" for cultural diversity in America. This is the school culture that Davies, Epstein and I knew as children.

Today's student teachers enter the university from a world of social distance, but seemingly made close through computer technology. These teachers need to acquire skills to become close to both their students and their families. I am pleased that so many California teacher education programs understand that need.

Therefore, it is with hope, I applaud California's mandate and expect that follow-up studies will note increases of incorporation of parent involvement issues and practices within teacher education and administrative preparation programs and our children's schools. However, most California teacher education faculty are including parent involvement because each personally believes in the benefit of parent involvement. An interview with CTC indicate that the standard is not currently assessed during their institutional reviews. CTC is waiting for the completion of a comprehensive

statewide review of teacher education program requirements toward the end of 2000. This review was mandated by SB 2042 and will include parent involvement issues among a long list of teacher education issues. CTC indicated that the result of this review would be a revision of teacher education requirements in California.

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Appendix A

Survey of Teacher Credential Programs Regarding
Home-School Partnership Standard

SURVEY OF TEACHER CREDENTIAL PROGRAMS REGARDING HOME-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP STANDARD

In 1997 the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing added a standard on preparation for home-school partnerships to be included in multiple and single subject teaching credentials. How is your institution including this standard within the teaching credential programs?

Please circle the responses that best fit your program.

Yes No Home-school partnership issues are included in a separate course.
Circle course number of units: 1 2 3

Yes No Home-school partnership issues are included within existing courses. Circle which classes:

reading methods	math methods
historical/societal foundations	cultural diversity
curriculum development	instructional methods
second language acquisition	special education
human development	educational psychology
other, specify	

Write the total number of courses that contain home-school partnership issues _____.

Yes No One or more of these courses include hands-on home-school partnership activities with parents, such as the following (**circle all** that apply):

parent conferences	parent newsletters	homework hotline
home reading	parent/student advocacy	
home visits	parent interviews	community service
including parents in classroom instruction		dealing with parent concerns
other _____		

Yes No In class home-school partnership issues include the following:

case studies	role-playing	conflict resolution
project creation	home surveys	research studies
other, _____		

Please return to Dr. Diana Hiatt-Michael, Professor of Education, and
Chair, AERA-SIG Parent-School-Community Partnerships
FAX 310-568-5755 or mail in enclosed envelope.